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ABSTRACT

People Place of Houston, Texas provides racially isolated elementary school children with exposure to various world cultures. The children who visit this center are selected from schools with a majority of Black, Anglo, or Mexican American children. Two major objectives of People Place are: the reduction of group isolation and discrimination, and the elimination and prevention of group and individual prejudice. The childrens' changes in attitude toward different cultures and ethnic groups were measured using doll play simulation. The results indicated greater positive attitude changes among children who had participated in the People Place experience, as compared to the control group. Black children exhibited significantly more attitude change than Mexican Americans; the amount of change among Anglo children was not significantly different from either of these groups. (GDC)

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EVALUATION OF A MULTI-CULTURAL PROJECT DESIGNED TO REDUCE GROUP ISOLATION

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Introduction

People Place of Houston is a multi-cultural center providing racially isolated school children with exposure to various cultures of the world. Visitors to this center range from first through sixth grade children chosen from schools with a high majority of either Black, Anglo, or Mexican-American children. The partial purpose of this experience is specifically stated in two of the objectives established at People Place.

1. The reduction of group isolation and discrimination
2. Elimination and prevention of group and individual prejudice.

This is the third year of the operation of People Place, and the general attitude about the project is quite positive. Previous evaluations of the project indicated a positive attitude toward the experience by students, teachers, administrators, and visitors (Woodward, 1974). The 1974-1975 evaluation (Capobianco, 1975) also indicated that the work of People Place was seen as positive by the various groups involved. An objective measure, the self-derogation scale, administered in the 1975 evaluation contained some mixed results, but in general indicated that there were some positive changes as a result of the children's two hour experience at the center.

Because it seemed fairly well established at this point that the groups tangential to the project such as teachers, parents, administrators and visitors were, and continued to be favorably impressed by the work of the project and because of the mixed results are on the children's level of self-derogation found in last years evaluation, the focus of this portion of the evaluation is on changes in a child's attitude towards other racial groups on a short term basis. Two objectives stated earlier in this report were the specific focal points of the evaluation. It seems that the whole function of a visit to a place such as People Place is that of changing an attitude towards culturally different groups.

The problem of evaluation of such a change is centered in the general problem of evaluating attitudinal change, and, the more specific problem of evaluating attitudinal change in young children. Research by Piaget (1951), Musen (1960), and Walls (1973) delineates at least four potential distractors involved in the measuring of attitudes in young children.

1. A narrow experience range exists, thereby connecting idiosyncratic meanings to certain phenomena.
2. The concrete-oriented child may have difficulty with the abstractions of attitude formation.
3. The distinctions between reality and fantasy are not clearly developed.
4. Language and expression skills are just beginning to develop.

In responding to difficulties in measuring children's attitude, Erikson (1958), Sears (1947), and Walls (1973) made use of the third mentioned distractor as the vehicle for such assessment. All used doll play activities and found them to be a viable projective technique in the study and attitudes of children. The idea behind this is that because the distinctions between reality and fantasy are not clearly developed, that which children will do with dolls does in fact represent the reality of the world to them. In the years of use and in various settings, this technique has proved to be a more reliable index of children's attitudes than any other assessment technique. It was on these grounds that a doll play methodology was chosen for the evaluation of the reduction of group isolation and discrimination.

Procedures

For the purpose of this evaluation, group isolation and discrimination was defined as a measure of the proximity or closeness at which racially different children would operate. It was therefore necessary to implement a situation that would allow children to demonstrate their attitudes toward racially different children through a proximity measure. An artificial situation was developed whereby the children could, by arranging racially different dolls in a play-like atmosphere, express his/her attitude. Three dolls approximately 6" in height were used; one doll representing a Black child, one an Anglo child and one a Mexican-American child. The actual physical color of the doll was the key discriminator. In the first stage of the assessment

process, it was necessary to ascertain that the children were able to distinguish their own ethnicity and to distinguish the different ethnicities of the dolls. After a brief period of manipulation with the dolls, each child was asked to choose a doll resembling himself. The number of times a child would choose a doll that did not represent his ethnic or racial background would later be used to evaluate the identification issue.

A mock classroom, proportional in size to the dolls had been built, and the children in the sample were asked, one at a time, to place the three dolls in this room in order to wait for the People Place teacher. Marks were made on a piece of paper on the floor of the play room to indicate the location of the three dolls as placed there by each subject. The race and grade level of the subject was also identified on that sheet of paper. As the next subject entered the experimental condition, a new sheet of paper was placed on the floor of the playroom and became the scoring sheet for that child. This became the raw proximity data to later be used in the analysis as a pre-test measure. After the children had completed their People Place visit, the same subjects were again asked to place the dolls in the room indicating that they were now waiting for the bus to take them back to their respective schools. Once again, records were kept of the locations of the dolls in the room. This measure constituted the post-test assessment measure.

Sample

On each of 22 days during the cycle accommodating the second and fourth grade students, three students, one Black, one Anglo and one Mexican-American were randomly sampled from the groups coming to People Place. The total sample then consisted of 66 children equally divided among these three ethnic groups. A control group proportional with respect to ethnicity and grade level attending a school function of similar length to that of People Place experience, but not involving any cross cultural or multi-cultural experience, were given the same situational doll play evaluation instrument. Measures were also taken on them before and after their experience of this school function. There were 30 children in this control group making the total sample of the evaluation study 96 children.

Dependent and Independent Variables

The dependent variable in this evaluation is the lessening of isolation characteristics among children. Operationally this was defined as a change in the total distance of separation between the dolls before and after the People Place or the school experience. A triangle was drawn through the three points which were the locations of the dolls for each child in both the pre and the post test experience. The perimeter of this triangle measured in centimeters then constituted the child's proximity score for that test. The difference between the pre-test proximity score and the post-test proximity score was taken as a

measure of the change in proximity. It was hypothesized that if the People Place experience did have an effect on the child's attitudes, it would be reflected in evidence that would show that the children having the People Place experience would place the dolls significantly closer together in the post-test measure than would the children in the control group.

For purposes of both statistical control and potential interactions, two other variables beside the treatment variable were identified; one being grade levels two and four, and the other, three categories of ethnicity. The data were then analyzed in a three-factor, 3 X 2 X 2 Analysis of Variance design. The specific hypotheses to be tested by such a design are:

1. There will be a significant difference in change scores as a function of the People Place treatment.
2. There will be a significant difference in change scores as a function of the ethnicity of the children.
3. There will be a significance in change scores as a function of the grade level of the children.
4. There will be significant interactions among these three independent variables.

Results

Analysis of the original data on whether or not the child made a selection of a doll representing himself and whether or not the child selected the doll of correct ethnicity to represent himself indicated overwhelmingly that the children were in fact able to discriminate among the three dolls and did select as

himself (or herself) the doll that represented the proper ethnicity. Of the 32 Black children in the People Place experience, 27 chose the proper doll originally. Of the 32 Mexican-American children in the experience, 28 chose the Mexican-American doll and of the 32 Anglo children, 30 of them chose the Anglo doll. This gave us sufficient confidence to proceed with the analysis because it was quite apparent that the children were able to discriminate among the ethnic differences among the three dolls.

Table I is an overall summary of the analysis of variance results. As can be seen in this Table, significant differences were found as a function of the treatment and as a function of the ethnicity of the child.

TABLE I

Analysis of Variance Summary Table

Source	SS	DF	MS	F
Ethnicity	712.335	2	356.168	3.225*
Grade	.766	1	.766	.007
Group	1736.4	1	1736.4	15.723*
Ethnicity by Grade	416.09	2	208.04	1.82
Ethnicity by Group	583.69	2	291.84	2.56
Grade by Group	6.5	1	6.5	.05
Ethnicity by Grade by Group	185.8	2	92.89	.81
Within	9553.422	84	113.73	

*P<.05

There were non-significant differences between grade levels and none of the potential interactions among these variables proved to be significant.

The most meaningful finding of this study is shown in Table II. On the average, the children who participate in the People Place experience placed the dolls 9.54 centimeters closer to each other in the post-test, while the children in the control group placed the dolls only .55 of a centimeter closer in their post-test. This is the reason for the significant difference between treatments. There was significantly greater change in the desired direction as a function of the People Place experience.

The interpretation of the ethnic differences as found in this analysis is a little more complex. Table II indicates the overall means for the two groups broken down by ethnic membership. Post hoc tests on the column averages indicate that overall the Black children showed significantly greater change than the Mexican-American children. The amount of change exhibited by the Anglo children falls between these two and is not significantly different from either group. In looking at the values

TABLE II

Ethnicity by Group Means

Group	Ethnicity: Black	Mexican-American	Anglo	
People Place	15.0 n = 15	4.32 n = 15	9.3 n = 15	9.54 n = 45
Control	- .4 n = 17	1.7 n = 17	.3 n = 17	.55 n = 51
	10.187 n = 32	3.5156 n = 32	6.49 n = 32	

within the Table it can be seen that the Black child in the People Place experience exhibited the greatest amount of change while the Mexican-American child in the People Place experience exhibited the least amount of change. It should be noted, however, that on the average all children in the People Place experience exhibited greater change than the children in the control experience.

As shown in Table III, the amount of change exhibited by 2nd graders is essentially the same as the amount of change exhibited by 4th graders in the People Place experience. On the average, 2nd graders exhibited 9.27 centimeters of change while the 4th graders exhibited 9.76 centimeters of change. This did not result in a significant difference. The same occured in a control group level with essentially no difference between the two groups.

TABLE III

Group by Grades Means

Group	Grade 2	Grade 4	
People Place	9.27 n = 30	9.76 n = 36	9.54 n = 66
Control	.866 n = 15	.233 n = 15	.55 n = 30
	6.47 n = 43	6.96 n = 51	

Interpretation

It is felt that the evidence is quite strong in supporting the belief that at least on a short term basis the People Place experience does in fact change the attitudes of children. It was clearly illustrated in the movement between the pre- and post test of the location of the dolls, that there was a reduction in group isolation and discrimination. How long lasting this change is, or what degree of permanence we can attribute to this experience is at this point unknown but it is most important to have been able to establish this short term change. Without such a change it would be an improbable hypothesis to believe that long range change was being accomplished by the experience. Because of the two-pronged nature of the People Place experience, that of seeing exhibits from many countries and that of being ethnically integrated while viewing this experience, it cannot be differentiated as to which of these is the primary causal agent for the change. It would be the opinion of the evaluators that it is the combination of the two which in fact makes the impact on the change of the attitudes of the children.

The ethnic differences found in the degree of change are more difficult to explain. It could be hypothesized that the Black children were more ready to change than Mexican-American children, or that the Black children are more open to external influences such as the People Place experience. It may well be that there is, in general, a more cautious or conservative attitude towards changing too quickly in Mexican-American children.

Such an attitude could well be a function of their cultural background. There are undoubtedly many other plausible explanations for this phenomena, and there is little else to say about it at this point other than encouraging future evaluations to more carefully study this question. It may ultimately be that slightly different kinds of experience are needed for the different ethnic groups in order to maximize attitudinal change in each group. In summary, it would be fair to say that apparently the People Place experience works. The issue now is to find out how to maximize it's efficiency.

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